

May 2013 extended essay reports

PHILOSOPHY

This is a supplementary report following the May 2013 session and should be read in conjunction with the November 2012 and May 2009 extended essay reports.

Overall grade boundaries

Grade:	A	B	C	D	E
Mark range:	29-36	23-28	16 - 22	8-15	0-7

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Candidates appear to make, with or without their supervisor's advice, an inappropriate choice of topic in that they a) choose a research question which is too broad, e.g. "Are our actions free?" or b) choose a research topic without regard to its *philosophical* dimensions, or c) base the essay on a film or television programme. There is nothing to prevent an essay entitled, *Bart Simpson, an Übermensch?* or *Moral Nihilism in 'Family Guy'* from scoring 36/36, but the temptation for the candidate to spend far too much time narrating his/her favourite episodes and far too little time philosophizing about them is very strong.

In a significant number of cases candidates reduce the overall score of an otherwise good or even outstanding essay by omitting one of the formal requirements, such as the abstract or the conclusion.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

While there is no harm whatever *per se* in consulting summative articles from internet sites such as Wikipedia, there is often far too much reliance on these in research. This is very often an excellent and convenient way of beginning research, but it is not acceptable to confine research to such sources. The same applies to school textbooks and teachers' notes. One of the main objectives of the EE is to help students become self-starting, proactive and, above all, *independent* learners. Mere recycling and regurgitation of introductory material impedes the fulfillment of this objective.

Some difficulties encountered regarding the supervisor's role are: a) they spend far too little time with the candidates or b) they do not offer the candidates appropriate advice about the scope, focus and subject area of their essays. Some candidates at schools where philosophy is not offered are often supported by supervisors with no background in philosophy. This automatically disadvantages candidates.